1: Roth--66 [2]
116, 771

(No date) 1890

Tasmanains

"As will be seen with regard to their religion and to a belief in a Supreme Being, authorities differ considerably. Widowson believed (p. 188) it to be 'generally supposed that they have not the slightest idea of a Supreme Being.' Breton (p. 349) says: 'They do not appear to have any rites or ceremonies, religious or otherwise.' On the other hand, most writers who touch on this subject agree in attributing some idea of religion to them."

116, 771

"Milligan gives us two versions of his experience regarding their religious beliefs. The one in the voyage of the Beacon (pp. 29-30) runs thus: 'They were polytheists; that is, they believed in guardian angels or spirits, and in a plurality of powerful but generally evil-disposed beings, inhabiting crevices and caverns of rocky mountains, and making temporary abode in hollow trees and solitary valleys; of these a few were supposed to be of great power, while to the majority were imputed much of the nature and attributes of the goblins and elves of our native land. The aborigines were extremely superstitious, believing most implicitly in the return of the spirits of their departed friends and relations to bless or injure them, as the case might be; and they often carried about with them one or other of the bones of the deceased as a charm against adversity.' The other account of Milligan, taken from Papers Roy. Soc. of V.D. Land for Jan. 1855, is as follows: 'Mr. Milligan said he had ascertained that the Tasmanian aborigines, previous to their intercourse with Europeans, distinctly entertained the idea of immortality as regarded the soul or spirit of man; their legends proved also their belief in a host of malevolent spirits and mischievous goblins, whose abodes were caverns and dark recesses of the dense forests, clefts in rocks on the mountain tops, etc.; and that they considered one or two spirits to be of omnipotent energy; but that they do not seem to have invested even these last with attributes of benevolence, although they reposed unqualified trust in

the tutelar agencies of the spirits of their departed friends and relations. To these guardian spirits they gave the generic name Warrawah, an aboriginal term, like the Latin word umbra, signi-[68]fying shade, shadow, ghost, or apparition.' Calder relates that on one occasion, 'while the natives were making the funeral pile, Robinson took occasion to extract from them what their ideas were of a future state, and where they thought the departed went to. They all answered, "Dreeny," that is, to England, saying, "Parleevar loggernu uenee toggerer Teeny Dreeny, mobberly Parleevar Dreeny" (native dead, fire; goes road England, plenty natives England). He tried to convince them that England was not the home of the departed, but did not argue them out of their belief. This simple reply shows that they quite believed in a life... after the destruction of the body at the funeral pile."

1: Roth--68
116, 771, 821

(No date) 1890

Tasmanians

"Robinson adds that they were fatalists, and also that they believed in the existence of both a good and evil spirit. The latter, he says, they called Raegoo wrapper, to whom they attributed all their afflictions. They used the same word to express thunder and lightning' (Journ. p. 18)."

"Davies (p. 417) thought it hard to believe that the natives have 'no idea of a future state, . . . and yet from every inquiry, both from themselves and from whites most conversant with them, I have never been able to ascertain that such belief exists. They believe in the existence of an evil spirit, called by some tribes Namma, who has the power by night; of him they are much afraid, and never will willingly go out in the dark. I never could make out that they believed in a good deity, for although they spoke of one, it struck me that it was what they had been told; they may, however, believe in one who has power by day. I have never been able to ascertain that they put either weapons or food in the tree with the dead.' But Davies' opinion that the natives did not believe in a future state is contradicted by several whom one should think would know. According to West (II. pp. 89-90): 'Their religious ideas were exceedingly meagre and uncertain. To Mr. Horton's inquiries, in 1821, they answered, "don't know," with broad grins. They appear to have had no religious rites, and few congenial ideas: they dreaded darkness and feared to wander from their fires; they recognized a malignant spirit, and attributed strong emotions to the devil [sic]. The feats imputed to his agency do not much differ from the sensations of night-mare. They believed him to be white--a notion, suggested by their national experience. They ascribed extraordinary convulsions to this malignant power, to his influence they traced madness. Lord Monboddo might have contrived their account

of the creation: they were formed with tails, and without knee-joints, by a benevolent being; another descended from [69] heaven, and compassionating the sufferers, cut off the tail, and with grease softened the knees. As to a future state, they expected to reappear on an island in the Straits, and to jump up white men. They anticipated in another life the full enjoyment of what they coveted in this. These scraps of theology...are of doubtful origin; nothing seems certain, except they dreaded mischief from demons of darkness. They had no idols.'"

"Backhouse, who may be considered, with Dove, as a person likely to have made good inquiries as to their beliefs, says (pp. 181-182): 'These people have received a few faint ideas of the existence and superintending providence of God; but they still attribute the strong emotions of their minds to the devil, who, they say, tells them this or that, and to whom they attribute the power of prophetic communication. It is not clear that by the devil they mean anything more than a spirit; but they say he lives in their breasts, on which account they shrink from having the breast touched. One of their names for a white man signifies a white devil or spirit; this has probably arisen from mistaking white men at first for spiritual beings. They have also some vague ideas of a future existence, as may be inferred from their remarks respecting the deceased woman on the Hunter Island. They also say they suppose that when they die, they shall go to some of the islands in the Straits, and jump up white men: but the latter notion may be of modern date.'"

"We give Dove's views in his own words (I. p. 253): 'The moral apprehensions which prevailed among them were peculiarly dark and meagre. It is remarkable that a persuasion of their being ushered by death into another and a happier state of existence was almost the only remnant [sic] of a primitive religion which maintained a firm abode in their minds. As might be expected, however, their ideas of a life beyond the grave were entirely of a sensual kind. To be enabled to pursue the chase with unwearied ardour and unfailing success, and to enjoy in vast abundance and with unsated appetite the pleasures which they courted on earth, were the chief elements which entered into their picture of an elysium. While there was no term in their native languages to designate the Creator of all things, they stood in awe of an imaginary spirit, who was disposed to annoy and hurt them. The appearance of this malignant demon, in some horrible form, was especially dreaded in the season of night. Two customs of a superstitious kind are still retained among them; neither, however, bearing the slightest reference even to low and misguided views of religious homage.'"

1: Roth--75 [2] (No date) 1890 Tasmanians
116, 262, 771

"Concerning their rejection of certain kinds of food, Davies (p. 414) states, that 'Some tribes, or portions of tribes, will not eat the female wallaby, others will not eat the male: to what superstition this is attributable, I am ignorant. Others will not eat scaled fish; and it appeared to me, when at Flinders Island, that the western natives would not eat the smooth-shelled haliotis, though the easterns did.' Backhouse (p. 171) also informs us that some of the natives only eat the male wallaby, others only the female; and adds: 'We were unable to learn the reason of this; but they so strictly adhere to the practice, that, it is said, hunger will not drive them to deviate from it.' We further learn from Calder (Journ. 1873) that no fish, except shell-fish, 'would any native of Tasmania ever touch; whether it was from natural aversion or superstition, in not known; but scale-fish of any kind' was an abomination to the entire race. This taboo of male or female wallaby, as the case may be, may probably be akin to simialr taboo practised by totemistic uncivilized races only. With regard to the Tasmanians, we do not appear to have any indications of totemism."